I really stayed minimalist on fixing & extending Lovecraft's expired copyright story 'The Book' here. Feel free, to check it out nonetheless. I also produced a YT video, but with an outdated AI-voice narrator only, as I am too low-income for my hobby.

Luckily, the narrator who gave voice to my sci-fi variant of this story, The Datapad (of Nyarlathotep), also narrated Lovecraft's unfinished story `The Book´. If interested, check this LINK: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yoLV2Kymsq4

His channel, `Capricious Cabrera´, is at: https://www.youtube.com/@CapriciousCabrera

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Disclaimer: No warranties. This is a work of fiction, and specifically an UNPAID attempt to modernize & finish the unfinished story 'The Book' by H.P. Lovecraft.

Trigger warnings:

Insanity

Cosmic Horror

Occultism

First Person Style

Murderous Shadows

The story begins:

From the diary of Garry Carver, Arkham, Massachusetts, October 1926:

My memories are very distorted. There is even much doubt as to where they begin, for at times I feel appalling vistas of years stretching behind me, while at other times it seems as if the present moment were an isolated point in a grey, formless infinity. I am not even certain how I am communicating this message. While I know I am speaking, I have a vague impression that some strange and perhaps terrible mediation will be needed to bear what I say to the points where I wish to be heard. My identity, too, is bewilderingly cloudy. I seem to have suffered a great shock, perhaps from some utterly monstrous outgrowth of my cycles of unique, incredible experience.

These cycles of experience, of course, all stem from that worm-riddled book. I remember when I found it, in a dimly lighted place near the black, oily river where the mists always swirl. That place was very old, and the ceiling-high shelves full of rotting volumes reached back endlessly through windowless inner rooms and alcoves. There were, besides, great formless heaps of books on the floor and in crude bins, and it was in one of these heaps that I found the thing. I never learned its title, for the early pages were missing, but it fell open toward the end and gave me a glimpse of something that did send my senses reeling.

There was a formula, a sort of list of things to say and do, which I recognized as something black and forbidden, something that I had read of before in furtive paragraphs of mixed abhorrence and fascination penned by those strange subculture delves into the universe's guarded secrets whose decaying texts I loved to absorb. It was a key, a guide, to certain gateways and transitions of which mystics have dreamed and whispered since the human race was young, and which lead to freedoms and discoveries beyond the three dimensions and realms of life and matter that we know. Not for centuries had any man recalled its vital substance or known where to find it, but this book was very old indeed. No printing press, but the hand of some half-crazed monk, had traced these ominous Latin phrases in lessons of awesome antiquity.

I remember how the old man leered and tittered, and made a curious sign with his hand when I bore it away. He had refused to take pay for it, and only long afterward did I realize why. As I hurried home through those narrow, winding, mist-choked waterfront streets I had a frightful impression of being stealthily followed by softly padding feet. The centuries, tottering houses on both sides seemed alive with a fresh and morbid malignity, as if some hitherto closed channel of evil foreboding had abruptly been opened. I felt that those walls and overhanging gables of mildewed brick and fungous plaster and timber, with fishy, eye-like, diamond-pane windows that leered, could hardly desist from advancing and crushing me, yet I had read only the least fragment of that blasphemous rune before closing the book and bringing it away.

I remember how I read the book at last, pale-faced, and locked in the attic room that I had long devoted to strange searching. The great house was very still, for I had not gone up till after midnight. I think I had a family then, though the details are very uncertain, and surreal, and I know there were many servants.

Just what the year was, I cannot say, for since then I have known many ages and dimensions, and have had all my notions of time dissolved and refashioned. It was by the light of candles that I read, I recall the relentless dripping of the wax, and some chimes came every now and then from distant belfries. I seemed to keep track of those chimes with a peculiar intentness as if I feared to hear some very remote, intruding note among them.

Then came the first scratching and fumbling at the dormer window that looked out high above the other roofs of the city. It came as I chanted aloud the ninth verse of that primal lay, and I knew amid my shudders what it meant. For he who passes the gateways always wins a shadow, and never again can he be alone. I had evoked, and the book was indeed all I had suspected. That night, I passed the gateway to a vortex of twisted time and vision, and when morning found me in the attic room, I saw in the walls and shelves and fittings the winged mockery of science that I had never seen before.

Nor could I ever after see the world as I had known it. Mixed with the present scene was always a little of the past and a little of the future, and every once-familiar object loomed alien in the new perspective brought by my widened sight. From then on, I walked in a fantastic dream of unknown and half-known shapes, and with each new gateway crossed, the less plainly could I recognize the things of the narrow sphere to which I had so long been bound. What I saw about me none else saw, and I grew doubly silent and aloof, lest I be thought mad. Dogs had a fear of me, for they felt the outside shadow that never left my side. But still, I read more, in hidden, forgotten books and scrolls to which my new vision led me, and pushed through fresh gateways of space and being and life patterns toward the core of the unknown cosmos.

I remember the night I made the five concentric circles of fire on the floor, and stood in the innermost one chanting that monstrous litany the ephemeral messenger from Tartary had brought. The walls melted away, and I was swept by a black wind through gulfs of fathomless gray with the needle-like pinnacles of unknown mountains miles below me. After a while there was utter blackness, and then the light of myriad stars forming strange, alien constellations. Finally, I saw a green-lit plain far below me and discerned on it the twisted towers of a city built in no fashion I had ever known or read of or dreamed of. As I floated closer to that city I saw a great square building of stone in an open space and felt a hideous fear clutching at me. I screamed and struggled, and after a blankness was again in my attic room, sprawled flat over the five phosphorescent circles on the floor. In that night’s wandering there was no more of strangeness than in many a former night’s wandering, but there was more terror because I knew: I was closer to those outside gulfs and worlds than I had ever been before. Thereafter, I was more cautious with my incantations, for I had no wish to be cut off from my body and from the earth in unknown abysses from which I could never return.

Yet, that accursed tome, that evil book, had tempted me into opening a gate. My selfish zeal for mastering secret powers beyond the scientific truth hammered into our students' brains at Miskatonic University had made me the fool allowing alien forces access into the reality we know as planet Earth. I understand, how obviously my nerves are wrecked by my experiences, and how striding through the city might also have gotten me infected with one of the rampant diseases, as we know them from addicts and the poorer city parts. And still: I could swear that feeling of dread, that feeling of a malevolent stalker heralds my doom. I have made myself into a witness to forces that do not make converts.
I am the disposable fool, who served his purpose and now finds himself alone and barely able to handle the aftermath.

But, I will not falter. I got myself an electric lantern (author note: flashlight predecessor) and purchased myself a switchblade and a revolver. The former, I coated with sacred oils rumored to harm creatures from beyond, just as in folklore silver bullets harm werewolves or nightshade might poison a vampire. On my revolver, the latter, I went for a long cartridge caliber 38 short barrel revolver that I could easily and speedily draw from the quick-draw holster I now wear day and night.

From the report of Marvin Taffer, a private investigator, Arkham, Massachusetts, November 1926:

When I arrived in Arkham, the first impression that left a mark on me was the deceptively convincing boring normalcy that, at least in my profession, should always be under much closer scrutiny, as soon, as possible! The Arkham train station was among the larger ones across the region and as such not noteworthy. People rushed toward trains or were busily disembarking. Children sobbed or laughed, busy trying to play games while being dragged along by their mother or father. Newspaper sellers shouted, which had the benefit of nearly everyone, except the deaf, being vaguely aware of the daily occurrences in and around Arkham.

My hotel was close by and had the benefit of being paid & prearranged by the agency. I imagined one of our secretaries booking it while eager to understand the crackling voice that replied through that wonderful phone invention. Contrary to others, and not due to any lack of money, I decided to walk to the hotel. Why? Because I had been sitting in a train for several hours the blood circulation would benefit from such. In my profession, one better remains in decent physical shape. Not, as the army expects it, but one should not overdo either smoking or alcohol and wisely stay away from darker substances tempting to lose ourselves in human vices.

Walking down a street also allowed me a first impression of the city, its smell, and the sorts of people one does meet here. Body language and manners can tell a lot if one has learned to assess such information properly. People in some cities are used to muggers, so many carry hidden weapons, and most will get unfriendly to outright hostile when one gets close to them at all. A cautionary form of social distancing. As with everything American, most people were rough in a good way, our way, the American way. Still, the less high-income classes still were seen in the old army coats now and then. Poverty sure was one of the Devil's gifts, but I was not fond of church sermons, so I never learned details about the symbolic truth in such.

The receptionist, Gerald Smithers, was a pleasant surprise to me, as he anticipated me being the latest arrival from out of town, and even guessed my name properly. My room key was handed to me and I was informed about my chance to still have lunch. Rice with chicken and sauce, a good coffee, and a lemon pudding dessert. I ordered a second coffee and smoked a cigarette, then started to work. The streets of Arkham were still bustling with cars and people. My map had markers with everything that our agencies could prepare. Visiting the home of Garry Carver, talking to his neighbors, eavesdropping around the police station, and eavesdropping on talks and whispers around me. Parts of the routine.

Albeit, barely 72 hours later, I had most of the information I could muster, and by our agency's contractual rules had to rapport and wait for further instructions. Hence, let me only summarize what my efforts could verify about this case: Garry Carver is dead, but the police certainly did a cover-up of the real occurrence. Supposedly killed in another tragic mugging or robbery, my investigation of the crime scene discovered evidence of a less common sort of homicide.

If the photos I have taken and the conclusions I have made after discussing those with the coroner are legit, then Garry Carver was attacked by an assailant of impressive physical prowess, and at that, an assailant capable of clawing into the shoulders of a grown adult, uplifting the struggling person into the air and smacking him against the walls of houses along the alley. It was a slaughter, not only a killing.

What my colleagues mockingly call the case of the alien nightmare bat or gargoyle is indeed in line with the guidelines for occult investigations in contrast to regular homicide investigations. As the mayor's office already put a proverbial lid on the truth of this, I will discreetly inform Miskatonic University, as the diary of Garry Carver may be true on the stalker, or nightmare killer bat, still being in the vicinity due to some form of access point we better get closed ASAP. I am aware of being shadowed by now, but I know better ways of protecting myself, as I have ensured that my electric lantern and my kerosene lamp shine a secret sign of elder deities that was handed to us by professors from Miskatonic University, back when our detective agency was contracted to conduct occult investigations on demand.

Copies of my report in detail have already been mailed to our agency and the Miskatonic University. Now, we have to await the decision of our contractors, and I will do this outside of Arkham.

The end

More from the author:

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